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LET'S MEET

MAVERICK

Clandestine warfare is a wildly unpredictable and dangerous game. For **Maverick**, it is a way of life.

A master in the deadly art of espionage, his unique mutant physiology and state-of-the-art weapons arsenal have become his stock-in-trade.

Currently suffering the effects of a terminal illness which is slowly consuming his body from within, Maverick is living proof that one's control over one's destiny is somewhat limited at best.

Haunted by his past. Hunted by his foes. Betrayed by his own body. In many ways, Maverick has good reason to fear life more than he does death.

Yet still he clings to life, all the while struggling to fill the little time he has left with some sense of purpose. Especially now that he has finally found a family to call his own— a testament to the fact that the ties that bind are often forged in the face of great adversity.

MAVERICK

A former CIA operative working for Team-X, David North became a mercenary for hire who goes by the moniker Maverick. Since then, he has specialized in the dirty jobs that no one else wants to do yet desperately need doing, using his mutant power to absorb and rechannel kinetic impact at will. Infected with the Legacy Virus and faced with an uncertain future, Maverick has no way of knowing what will kill him first: his many enemies... or his own body.

THE RED GUARDIAN

Red Guardian: Motivated by what he feels is the need for a national symbol of hope and pride, Krassno Granitsky is the latest in a long line of Soviets to adopt the identity of the Red Guardian. A superb athlete, Granitsky is still training and adapting to his role as a hero.

OMEGA RED

Omega Red (a.k.a. Arkady) is a former mutant secret "super soldier" of the Soviet Intelligence Agency. He was implanted with carbonadium coils which he can shoot forward from his wrists in order to ensnare his victims. Due to his mutant "death factor" he must drain the life forces of others in order to remain active.

IVAN PUSHKIN

The powerful head of the Russian mafia, Pushkin's ruthless and unmerciful tactics have earned him the name Ivan the Terrible. Pushkin frequently enlists his bodyguards/enforcers, Hammer and Sickle, to keep his enemies in line. Pushkin is constantly trying to expand his territory, and intends for nothing to get in his way.

HAMMER

Enlisted as a teenager by Ivan Pushkin to join his criminal organization, Boris Lubov goes by the code name of Hammer, a name matched by the deadly weapon that he carries. Along with Sickle, he serves as bodyguard and errand boy to Pushkin. Hammer and Sickle are devoted to him, and their loyalty knows no bounds.

SICKLE

Serving as Ivan Pushkin's personal bodyguard, and usually working in conjunction with his partner, Hammer, Sickle (a.k.a. Nikolai Vronsky) literally uses an energized sickle to slice at his enemies.

ELENA IVANOVA

Aside from being a deadly field operative trained in various arts of hand-to-hand combat, ex-KGB agent Elena Ivanova is also a skilled psi-talent. Driven by a desperate need to avenge her mother's death at the hands of Sabretooth, Elena is relentless in her obsession to locate Victor Creed. Her search led her to Canada— where she forged an unexpected friendship with the ill-fated Maverick.

BRIAN JOHNSON

At sixteen, Brian Johnson learned he was a mutant and that he had contracted the Legacy Virus. Maverick arranged for Brian and his family to be relocated after anti-mutant violence destroyed their home. Though Brian possesses the ability to emit electrically-charged bursts of energy, his control over these powers is becoming increasingly erratic as his condition worsens.

PREVIOUSLY IN

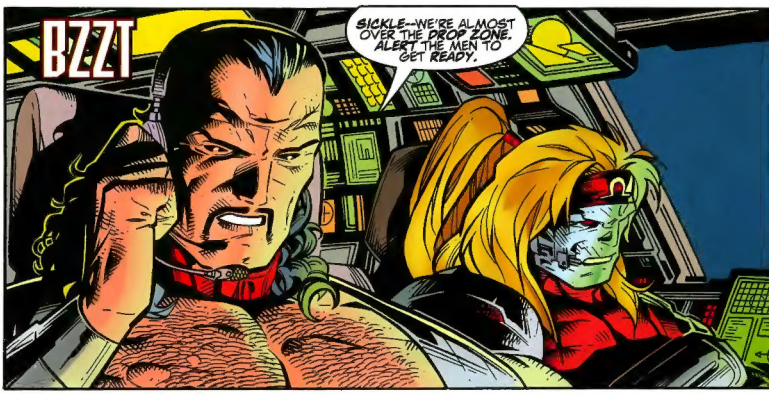
MAVERICK

Maverick and the Red Guardian escaped Ivan Pushkin's underground dungeon, hurrying to stop the racketeer from shipping missiles, armed with anthrax bacteria, to a fortified A.I.M. compound.

If the anthrax is released, billions will die, so Maverick and the Guardian stowed on board Pushkin's carrier, realizing the odds would be against them and preparing for the fight of their lives.

Design by COMICRAFT's John Marasigan

0312 HOURS.
SOMEWHERE ABOVE THE SWISS ALPS, JUST SOUTH OF LIECHTENSTEIN--
--A NONDESCRIPT, ARMORED TRANSPORT MAKES A SILENT APPROACH TOWARDS ITS DESTINATION.

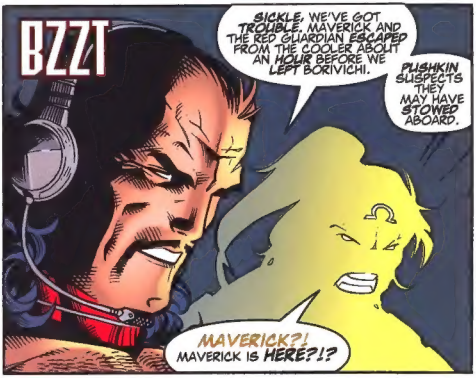


MAVERICK™ Vol. 1, No. 12, August, 1998. Published by MARVEL COMICS. Joseph Calamari, President. Stan Lee, Publisher. Shirrel Rhoades, Executive VP, Publishing. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Published monthly. Copyright © 1998 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved. Price $2.99 per copy in the U.S. and $4.20 in Canada. GST #R127032852. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. MAVERICK (including all prominent characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof) is a trademark of MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC. Printed in the U.S.A.

--RAINING DOWN LIKE A SWARM OF LOCUSTS ONTO THE TINY LANDING FIELD BELOW.
Stan Lee PRESENTS: RED REIGN
PART 3
MORTAL COILS
JORGE GONZALEZ
WRITER
JIM CHEVNG & LEO FERNANDEZ
PENCILLERS
ANDREW PEPOY
INKER
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS & VIRTUAL CALLIGRAPHY
LETTERS
KEVIN SOMERS
COLORIST
FRANK PITTARESE
EDITOR
BOB HARRAS
EDITOR IN CHIEF
THIS STORY TAKES PLACE BEFORE THE EVENTS IN QUICKSILVER #6.
KPOW!
TKOOM!
CHOOM!
IT'S HYDRA! SOUND THE
ALAARGH!
FRAKKT
FRAKKT
FRAKKT
TAKEN COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE, THE SENTRIES GUARDING THE ENTRANCE TO THE SECRET AIM OUTPOST ARE QUICKLY THROWN INTO DISARRAY--
--BECOMING EASY CANNON FODDER FOR IVAN PUSHKIN'S WELL-TRAINED DEATH SQUADS. WHAT FOLLOWS IS A BLOODBATH...

WHAT'S THAT FLASHING?
INCOMING MESSAGE FROM CONTROL. MUST BE IMPORTANT IF THEY BROKE RADIO SILENCE.

WELL? WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S--
SHHHH!


BZZT
SICKLE. WE'VE GOT TROUBLE. MAVERICK AND THE RED GUARDIAN ESCAPED FROM THE COOLER ABOUT AN HOUR BEFORE WE LEFT BORIVICHI.
PUSHKIN SUSPECTS THEY MAY HAVE STOWED ABOARD.
MAVERICK?! MAVERICK IS HERE?!?

I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.

ARKADY, WAIT--!
HE'S MINE!

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MEANWHILE, HIDING INSIDE ONE OF THE TRANSPORT'S CRAMPED, BUT OTHERWISE DESERTED, STORAGE COMPARTMENTS--
--THE STOWAWAYS IN QUESTION ANXIOUSLY BIDE THEIR TIME...
YOU'RE LOOKING A LITTLE GREEN THERE, MATE.
IT'S NOTHING. JUST A SLIGHT CASE OF NERVES... AND MOTION SICKNESS.
HOW MUCH FIELD EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD, ANYWAY? ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE UP TO THIS?
I'LL BE FINE ONCE WE'RE ON THE GROUND. YOU HAVE MY WORD ON THAT.
LET'S GET ONE THING STRAIGHT, YOU MAY CALL YOURSELF THE RED GUARDIAN AND CLAIM TO BE WORKING ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS--
--BUT I DON'T KNOW YOU--AND YOUR WORD DOESN'T MEAN A HILL OF BEANS TO ME.
WHICH MEANS--AND DON'T TAKE THIS PERSONALLY--THAT I'M STILL NOT CONVINCED I CAN COUNT ON YOU.
NO OFFENSE TAKEN. I HAVE SIMILAR SENTIMENTS TOWARDS YOU.
BUT REGARDLESS OF OUR MUTUAL MISTRUST, I CAN ASSURE YOU I WILL NOT BE A LIABILITY ON THIS MISSION.
YOU'D BETTER NOT BE. WE'RE DROPPING RIGHT INTO AN ENEMY HOT ZONE, AND I CAN'T BE WATCHING YOUR BACK WHEN WE GET DOWN THERE.
THERE'S TOO MUCH AT STAKE!
YOU NEED NOT REMIND ME OF WHAT'S AT STAKE HERE. I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO THINK OF LITTLE ELSE SINCE WE GOT AIRBORNE.
WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION ARE NOT SOMETHING TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY, ESPECIALLY NOT WHEN A FIEND LIKE PUSHKIN IS INVOLVED.
THE MAN IS A RUTHLESS AND IMMORAL MONSTER. HE WON'T THINK TWICE ABOUT USING SUCH WEAPONS AGAINST FRIENDS AND FOES ALIKE.

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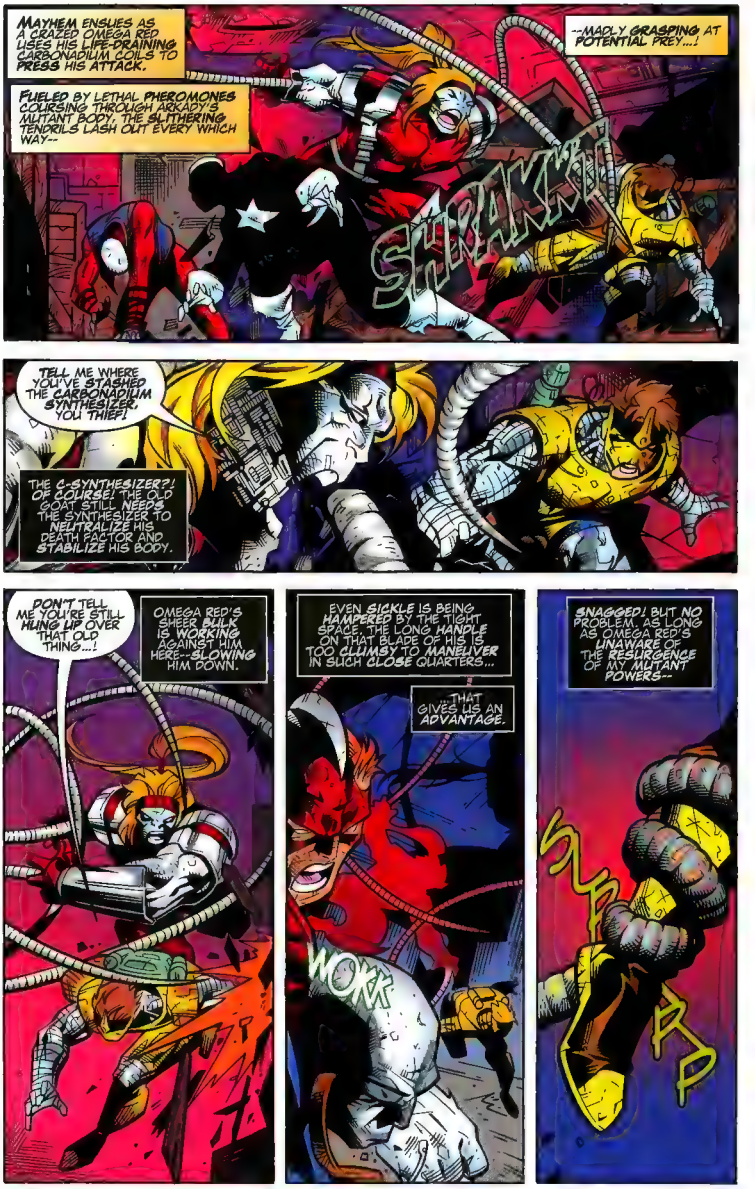
BELIEVE ME, THE THOUGHT OF HIM GETTING HIS PAWS ON A.I.M.'S CACHE OF BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS IS ABSOLUTELY CHILLING.
I'LL DO WHATEVER'S NECESSARY TO MAKE SURE HE FAILS, EVEN IF THAT ENTAILS SACRIFICING MY OWN LIFE TO DO IT. CAN YOU SAY THE SAME?
I--
KLANGG
WELL, WELL, OUR FIRST CATCH OF THE DAY!
OUT OF MY WAY, GYPSY BOY! I COULDN'T CARE LESS WHAT YOU DO WITH THE GUARDIAN--
--BUT THE PLEASURE OF KILLING MAVERICK IS MINE AND MINE ALONE!
UNNF!
THRASSH
HERE'S WHERE THE FUN BEGINS...!


MAYHEM ENSUES AS A CRAZED OMEGA RED USES HIS LIFE-DRAINING CARBONADIUM COILS TO PRESS HIS ATTACK.
FUELED BY LETHAL PHEROMONES COURSING THROUGH ARKADY'S MUTANT BODY, THE SLITHERING TENDRILS LASH OUT EVERY WHICH WAY--
--MADLY GRASPING AT POTENTIAL PREY...!
SHAKK!!
TELL ME WHERE YOU'VE STASHED THE CARBONADIUM SYNTHESIZER, YOU THIEF!
THE C-SYNTHESIZER?! OF COURSE! THE OLD GOAT STILL NEEDS THE SYNTHESIZER TO NEUTRALIZE HIS DEATH FACTOR AND STABILIZE HIS BODY.
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE STILL HUNG UP OVER THAT OLD THING...!
OMEGA RED'S SHEER BULK IS WORKING AGAINST HIM HERE--SLOWING HIM DOWN.
EVEN SICKLE IS BEING HAMPERED BY THE TIGHT SPACE. THE LONG HANDLE ON THAT BLADE OF HIS IS TOO CLUMSY TO MANEUVER IN SUCH CLOSE QUARTERS...
...THAT GIVES US AN ADVANTAGE.
WOK!
SNAGGED! BUT NO PROBLEM. AS LONG AS OMEGA RED'S UNAWARE OF THE RESURGENCE OF MY MUTANT POWERS--
SPARP

--I'VE STILL GOT AN ACE UP MY SLEEVE, 'CAUSE EVEN THOUGH THEY'VE BEEN OUT OF WHACK SINCE MY RELAPSE--
NNNG!
WHAT THE--?!
TSSSZZRAKKT
--THEY'RE STILL GOOD IN A PINCH--!
AGGT--!
WHAKK
JUST GOT WORD FROM THE GROUND TROOPS THAT THE LANDING STRIP'S BEEN SECURED. BETTER BRACE YOURSELVES, SICKLE--I'M TAKING US DOWN.
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--INADVERTENTLY KNOCKING THE COMBATANTS IN THE STORAGE COMPARTMENT OFF-BALANCE.
TWEKK
UMMF!
AAAK!
SICKLE, DO YOU COPY...?

WRAP IT UP, GUARDIAN! COME ON--!

THE PILOT MUST HAVE ENGAGED THE TRANSPORTER'S VTOL CAPABILITIES.
RAAAU

WRRRRRR
IT'S TIME TO BAIL--!

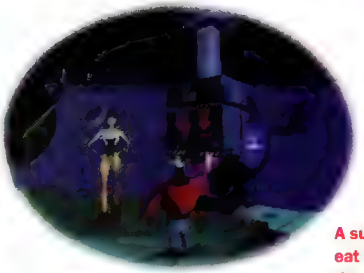
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, ARKADY! YOU'RE HERE TO DO A JOB, REMEMBER? NOT TO CARRY OUT OLD GRUDGES.
LET THEM GO. YOUR MUSCLE'S NEEDED ELSEWHERE. THEY'LL BE DEALT WITH LATER.
ONLY BY MY HAND, NOT YOURS!
I'M WARNING YOU, SICKLE--OUTTA MY WAY! MAVERICK AND I HAVE AN OLD SCORE TO SETTLE!
IT CAN WAIT. FOR NOW WE CARRY ON AS PLANNED. YOU'RE TO ACCOMPANY ALPHA SQUAD AND HELP THEM TAKE OUT THE BUNKER'S COMMAND CENTER.
FROM THERE YOU'LL COORDINATE THE EFFORTS TO RAID THE MUNITIONS WING LIKE WE DISCUSSED.
AND IF I DON'T?
DA...
BUT DON'T PRESS YOUR LUCK, LITTLE MAN. PUSH ME TOO FAR, AND YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF SHARING AN EARLY GRAVE WITH MAVERICK--
--DEAL OR NO DEAL!
DON'T BE STUPID, PUSHKIN'S KNOWN AS IVAN THE TERRIBLE FOR A REASON. WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO YOU IF YOU RENEGE ON YOUR DEAL WITH HIM WON'T BE PRETTY.
UNDERSTAND?

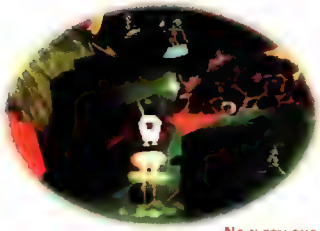
BZZT
HAMMER?
WHAT THE BLAZES IS GOING ON BACK THERE? SHOULD I SEND BACK-UP?
NEGATIVE. IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT. MAVERICK AND THE OTHER DO-GOODER GOT AWAY.
WHAT ABOUT OMEGA RED? HE STORMED OUT OF HERE IN A HUFF. YOU KNOW WE'RE ON A TIGHT SCHEDULE-- WE CAN'T AFFORD ANY LOOSE CANNONS.
IF HE SHOULD WANDER OFF AND--
DON'T WORRY. I WAS ABLE TO CALM HIM DOWN AND REMIND HIM OF HIS RESPONSIBILITIES. HE WON'T BE A PROBLEM.
ALERT THE OTHERS TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR OUR UNWANTED PARTY-CRASHERS-- BUT TO LEAVE THEM TO ME. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THEM PERSONALLY.
NIKOLAI... I DON'T THINK THAT'S WISE. YOUR HATRED FOR MAVERICK IS CLOUDING YOUR--
I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING, HAMMER.
I'LL RENDEZVOUS WITH YOU AT THE BIOGENICS LAB AFTER I'M DONE. OVER AND OUT!
BZZT

042A HOURS
LOOKS LIKE THE MAJORITY OF PLISHKIN'S FORCES ARE CONVERGING ON THE STRONGHOLD'S MAIN ARMORY--WITH OMEGA RED LEADING THE PACK.
AND THERE'S HAMMER'S SQUAD SEVERAL LEVELS BELOW--FENDING OFF SOME HEAVY RESISTANCE OUTSIDE THE BIOGENICS LAB.
WE'LL DEAL WITH THE CONVENTIONAL ARMAMENTS LATER. RIGHT NOW, WE HAVE TO NEUTRALIZE THE ANTHRAX CULTURES AND WHATEVER OTHER BIOHAZARDS A.I.M.'S SCIENTISTS ARE MANUFACTURING IN THAT LAB.
MORE THAN LIKELY, THE CUSTOMIZED STEALTH MISSILES AND THEIR ACCOMPANYING WARHEADS ARE STORED THERE AS WELL. WE'LL HAVE TO DISABLE THOSE TOO.
WHAT ABOUT SICKLE?
WE'LL HAVE TO SPLIT UP. ASSUMING THESE SCHEMATICS ARE ACCURATE, THIS NETWORK OF AIR VENTS SHOULD GET YOU INTO THE LAB BEFORE HAMMER AND HIS MEN CAN FIGHT THEIR WAY INSIDE.
I'LL GET RID OF SICKLE.
EVEN NOW YOU THINK ONLY OF YOUR OWN SELF-INTERESTS.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I SAW THE FIRE IN SICKLE'S EYE. OMEGA RED'S NOT THE ONLY ONE WITH A VENDETTA AGAINST YOU, AND I SUSPECT THE FEELING IS MUTUAL.
DON'T YOU REALIZE THAT YOUR PETTY SQUABBLES ARE GOING TO JEOPARDIZE OUR MISSION?!
YOU'RE WRONG. SICKLE'S POSITIONED HIMSELF IN THE ONLY CORRIDOR BETWEEN US AND THE BIOGENICS WING. IF HE CATCHES ON TO WHAT WE'RE UP TO AND ALERTS HAMMER, WE'LL NEVER GET NEAR THOSE WEAPONS.
SOMEONE NEEDS TO KEEP HIM DISTRACTED WHILE THE OTHER TAKES THE ALTERNATE ROUTE INTO THE LAB.
BUT--
DON'T ARGUE WITH ME, JUST GO! I'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU AS SOON AS I CAN!

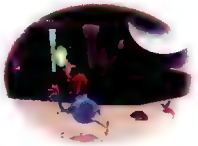
Some superhero. He doesn't even know the definition of fearless and courageous.

Why does this wiseguy get all the glory?





A superhero should eat his protein. Not ride around on it.



What kind of superhero hangs around with floozies?

No x-ray eyes. No fancy-schmancy belt. What's so special about this guy?

PlayStation

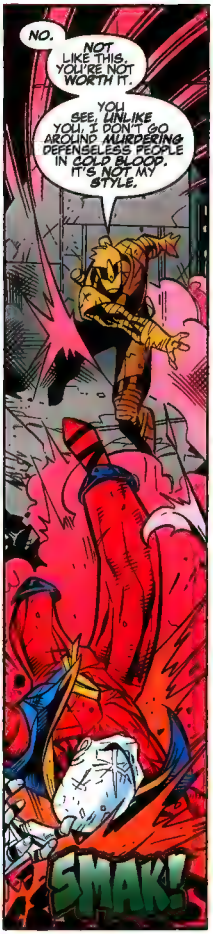
Free-roaming 3-D gameplay. Fully interactive sound and environments. Hard-core action shooting and open exploration. Classic platform elements. And the occasional intergalactic wedgie.

BLASTO

www.playstation.com

0438 HOURS.
LOOKING FOR ME?
WE'VE BEEN PUSSYFOOTING AROUND LONG ENOUGH. TIME FOR YOU TO GET WHAT'S COMING TO YOU--!
MAVERICK!
SHRIK
YOU'VE GOT IT BACKWARDS, SICKLE--
TSSSS
TS
SZZKTTZ
WH--?!
--IT'S YOU WHO'S GETTING HIS COMEUPPANCE!
THWAK
THUMMF!

THWOK
SNAKK
AAAAKT!
CHUDT
TSSSS
IT'S OVER, SICKLE. YOU LOSE AGAIN!
EEERRG!
HE'S NOT EVEN FIGHTING BACK ANYMORE. IT'D BE SO EASY TO JUST SNAP HIS NECK...
ららららら
LLLLUK!
WHAT... ARE YA WAITIN' FOR, HERO? AREN'T YOU GONNA FINISH ME OFF? GO AHEAD... DO IT!


NO.
NOT LIKE THIS. YOU'RE NOT WORTH IT.
YOU SEE, UNLIKE YOU, I DON'T GO AROUND MURDERING DEFENSELESS PEOPLE IN COLD BLOOD. IT'S NOT MY STYLE.
SMAK!

BESIDES-- I NEED YOU TO RELAY A MESSAGE TO YOUR BUDDY HAMMER.
TELL THAT SCUM OF A PARTNER OF YOURS THAT I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN ABOUT HIS ROLE IN MAJOR BARRINGTON'S ASSASSINATION.
TELL HIM THAT JUSTICE WILL BE SERVED-- THAT HIS DAY OF RECKONING IS AT HAND!

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ALTAMONTE SPRINGS, FLORIDA--HOME TO THE RECENTLY RELOCATED JOHNSON FAMILY.
FORMER KGB AGENT ELENA IVANOVA HAS BEEN OCCUPYING THEIR UPSTAIRS GUEST ROOM FOR ALMOST A WEEK NOW--
--RECUPERATING FROM INJURIES SUSTAINED DURING A VICIOUS CLASH WITH THE HOMICIDAL SABRETOOTH, WHICH LEFT HER IN A CATATONIC STATE.
EVER SINCE MAVERICK'S DEPARTURE, YOUNG BRIAN JOHNSON HAS TAKEN HIS PLACE AT ELENA'S SIDE--STANDING VIGIL FOR HOURS EACH DAY.
SOMETIMES TALKING OR READING TO HER. SOMETIMES LISTENING TO MUSIC TOGETHER.
AND OTHER TIMES... JUST SIMPLY SHARING A MUTUAL SILENCE.
NNN
WHOA. ALMOST FAINTED THAT TIME.
THERE'S NO DENYING IT--HEADACHES HAVE BEEN STEADILY INCREASING SINCE MY LITTLE OUTING IN DOC KELLER'S OFFICE.
STRAIN OF USING MY POWERS LIKE I DID MUST HAVE MADE MY CONDITION WORSE. SO MUCH FOR KARMIC FAIR PLAY!
HARD TO RESIST THE URGE TO CALL MAVERICK ON MY CHATTERBOX, BUT I KNOW HE HAD SOME PERSONAL STUFF TO SORT OUT--AND I WANNA GIVE HIM HIS SPACE.
STILL... I HOPE HE COMES BACK SOON...!

BULLPEN BULLETINS

ON SALE JUNE 17

CAPTAIN AMERICA *#8*

There's a crisis at Cape Canaveral, as CAP and WARBIRD discover a <REDACTED> prison camp! Continuing the AVENGERS crossover! By MARK WAID and ANDY KUBERT

EXCALIBUR *#123*

The team takes on M.M.O.C. – the mutant with the powers of the original X-MEN! And now he's gained EXCALIBUR's powers as well! By BEN RAAB and TREVOR SCOTT!

HEROES FOR HIRE *#14*

The spotlight falls on the BLACK KNIGHT, as DANE WHITMAN confronts a corporate raider who turns out to be a fire-breathing dragon. By JOHN OSTRANDER and MARY MITCHELL!

INCREDIBLE HULK *#467*

The HULK is the strongest one there is, but can he kill – himself? After suffering his greatest loss, he's aiming to find out! By PETER DAVID and ADAM KUBERT!

INCREDIBLE HULK: BEAUTY & THE BEAST *TPB*

A look back at the doomed romance of BETTY ROSS and BRUCE BANNER from the first meeting to their wedding and beyond! By STAN LEE, JACK KIRBY, JOHN BYRNE, PETER DAVID and more

MARVEL ANNUAL '98 STARRING: THE SILVER SURFER AND THOR *'98*

The warrior-god of Titan, MILENNIUS, has stolen the power of the SILVER SURFER! But he can't steal THOR's thunder! By TOM DeFALCO and RAMON BERNADO!

THUNDERBOLTS *#17*

GRAVITON is back. GRAVITON is bad. And he's gonna lay down the law on both the THUNDERBOLTS and the LIGHTNING ROD! By KURT BUSIEK and MARK BAGLEY!

WHAT IF *#111*

"What If WOLVERINE had become a HORSEMAN of APOCALYPSE?" You won't believe your eyes as WOLVIE becomes the fourth horseman – DEATH! By TOM DeFALCO and ADAM DEKRAKER

PETER PARKER, SPIDER-MAN *#94*

SPIDEY is determined to solve the mystery of JOEY Z and he's going to venture into the New York underworld to find the answers! By HOWARD MACKIE and JAVIER SALTARES

SEEKER 3000 *#31*

The battle rages on, as the SEEKER is boarded by the barbaric HKKKKT. This one's got more cosmic action than *Starship Troopers*! By DAN ABNETT, IAN EDGINTON and ANDREW CURRIE!

SPIDER-MAN: MADE MEN *#1*

A gangster epic – told from the point of view of the gangsters! Featuring DARE-DEVIL and the PUNISHER, and the gang war to end all gang wars! By HOWARD MACKIE and NORMAN FELCHLE!

X-MAN *#41*

A major turning point in the relationship between MADELYNE PRYOR and NATE GREY! It's a new direction! New characters! But shh! That same old X MAN! By TERRY KAVANAGH and RICHARD PACE

X-MEN *#78*

The SHADOW KING has taken over the Psionic Planet! This sounds like a perfect time for the return of PROFESSOR X! By JOE KELLY and GERMAN GARCIA!

X-MEN: THE MANGA *#11*

Alone in the Arctic wasteland, WOLVERINE has a run-in with his deadliest foe, SABRETOOTH! By REI NAKAHARA!

ITEM! It's time once again to announce the winners of the ***HARVEY AWARDS***, which are chosen by comics professionals across the land! Mighty Marvel scored several awards, which is pretty nifty, when you consider the high quality of our competition! So here they are, the 1998 Harvey Winners:

BEST WRITER: KURT BUSIEK for *Kurt Busiek's Astro City*, AVENGERS, and THUNDERBOLTS

BEST ARTIST: P. CRAIG RUSSELL for *Elric Stormbringer* and DOCTOR STRANGE: WHAT IS IT THAT DISTURBS YOU, STEPHEN?

SPECIAL AWARD FOR HUMOR: SERGIO ARAGONES

BEST INKER: CHARLES BURNS for *Black Hole*

BEST LETTERER: TODD KLEIN for KA-ZAR, *Castle Waiting*, and *U.S.*

BEST COLORIST: CHRIS WARE for *Acme Novelty Library*

BEST COVER ARTIST: ALEX ROSS for *Kurt Busiek's Astro City, Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*, and SQUADRON SUPREME trade paperback

SPECIAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PRESENTATION: *Acme Novelty Library*

BEST NEW SERIES: *Penny Century* by JAIME HERNANDEZ

BEST CONTINUING OR LIMITED SERIES: *Kurt Busiek's Astro City* by KURT BUSIEK and BRENT ANDERSON

BEST SINGLE ISSUE: *Eightball #18* by DAN CLOWES

BEST ALBUM OF ORIGINAL MATERIAL: *Sin City: Family Values*

BEST ALBUM OF PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED MATERIAL: *Batman: Black and White*

BEST ANTHOLOGY: *Dark Horse Presents*

BEST SYNDICATED STRIP: *Mutts* by PATRICK McDONNELL

BEST BIOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, OR JOURNALISTIC PRESENTATION: *The Comics Journal*

BEST AMERICAN EDITION OF FOREIGN MATERIAL: *Drawn & Quarterly*

BEST DOMESTIC REPRINT PROJECT: *Jack Kirby's New Gods*

Congratulations to all the winners! We'll be putting our Harveys up on the shelf along with all our No-Prizes!

ITEM! Marvel super heroes are always in fashion, but they're usually not featured in fashion magazines! That all changed with a recent issue of *Arena*, an international magazine that's sort of a *Cosmopolitan* for men! Those clever folks at *Arena* figured that since the Marvel heroes are known for their model behavior, they would actually use them to model some cool new clothes! A collection of Marvel's hottest artists, including MIKE ZECK, BILL SIENKIEWICZ, JOE QUESADA, PAT OLLIFFE, and MARK BAGLEY illustrated such Marvel heroes as DAREDEVIL, NICK FURY, and the SILVER SURFER, dressed in fashions by the world's top designers! Among the designers who outfitted our heroes were such luminaries as GUCCI, ARMANI, RALPH LAUREN, and VERSACE! The 12-page, full-color spread showed that even super heroes need to dress for success! BRUCE BANNER was clothed in a nifty pin-stripe suit – but then he turned into THE HULK and busted right out of his designer duds! Sadly, they don't make designer clothes in ol' Greenskin's size! Where are those unstable molecules when you really need them?

STAN'S SOAPBOX!

Hi, Heroes!

Welcome back to the literary fountainhead of wisdom and enlightenment! It doth truly warm the cockles of my heart to know that every reader, upon finishing the Soapbox, becomes a wiser, more spiritually enriched human being. Hey, it's the least I can do for mankind! By the way, I'll send an auxiliary No-Prize in a plain wrapper to the first True Believer who can tell me what in the name of Thor's shampoo a heart's cockles really are!

Tony Culpepper of Montgomery, AL starts us off with this soul-wrenching query:

"When you created Spider-Man, why did you use an aunt and uncle for Peter instead of a mom and dad?"

It's kinda hard to remember that far back, Tony, but I think it was because I felt our readers would be more simpatico with an orphan. Also, I liked the sound of "Aunt May" and "Uncle Ben." "Mom May" or "Pop Ben" doesn't quite do it for me!

Remember when we had an "Is It My Imagination, Or --?" contest? Our next No-Prize goes to the first letter we received, from Richard Vasseur of Ontario, Canada:

"Is it my imagination, or are comics losing their idealism?"

I can't answer for all comics, Dick, but in the case of Marvel's batty Bullpenners I can vouch for the fact that you won't find a more idealistic gaggle of guys and gals anywhere south of Alpha Centauri. Face it, most of 'em are real young (like me, of course!) and didja ever know a young person who wasn't a certifiable idealist?

Rafael Gonzales Jr. of The Bronx, NY is obviously a true survivalist. Here's why:

"If you had to save Manhattan from being crushed by the magnetic powers of Magneto, which super heroes would you pick to save Manhattan?"

Hey, Rafe, I wouldn't have time to pick anybody – I'd be too busy fleeing to Brooklyn! But, if I really hadda pick, I'd round up the X-Men (assuming I'd have time to search through all their different titles!) and tell them to tackle ol' Maggie. The problem is, by the time they got there, Magneto might have turned into a good guy again! At mixed-up Marvel it's sometimes hard to tell the heroes from the villains without a scorecard. Hey, what an idea! We should sell Marvel scorecards! Brilliant! I hereby No-Prize myself!

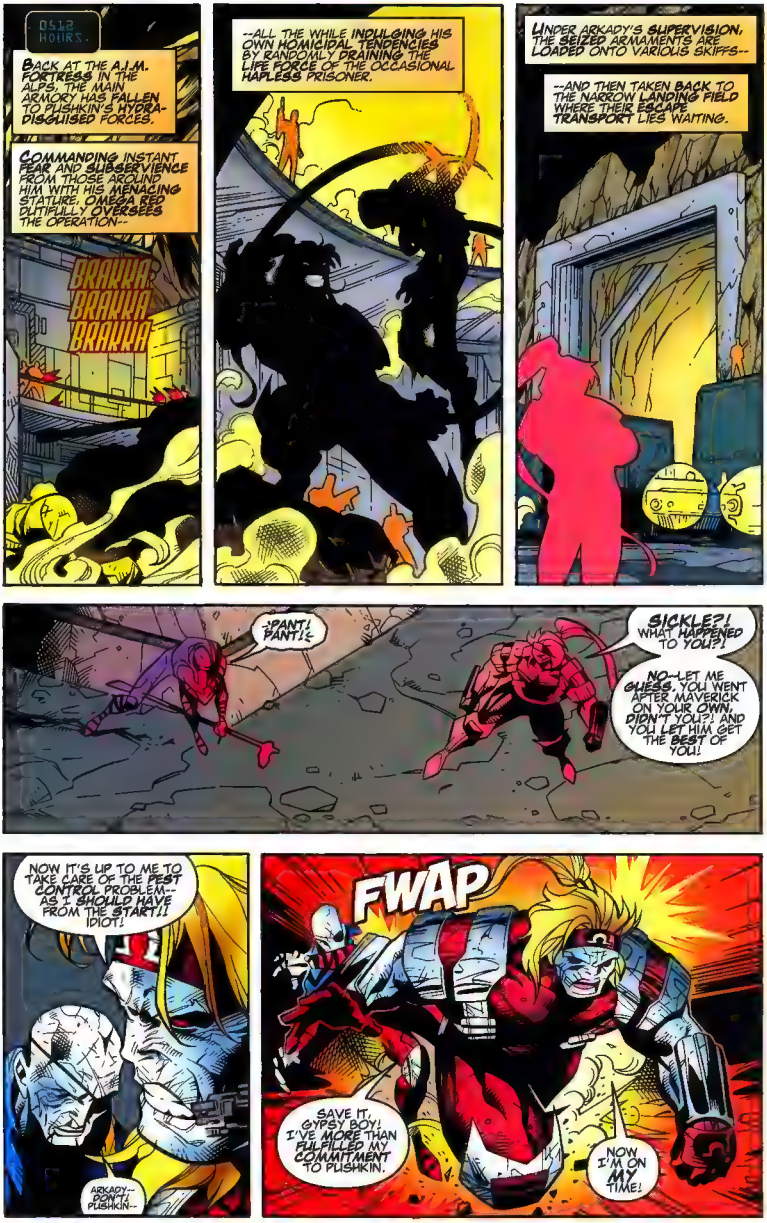
Well, I could go on and on, but how much cultural enjoyment can you handle at one sitting? Besides, we have to allow you enough time to write or E-mail me yourself. But, even though the prospect of winning a No-Prize is enough to make strong men will, stay calm, keep cool, and know ye that the fickle fingers of fortune may yet clasp thy smooth and scrawny neck! Now, here it is – the Valhalla of addresses: *"Stan's Soapbox" c/o BULLPEN BULLETINS, Marvel Comics, 387 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016.* Or, for the technocrat wizards amongst us, E-mail my friendly neighborhood computer at *stanzfanz@aol.com.* 'Nuff said!

Excelsior!

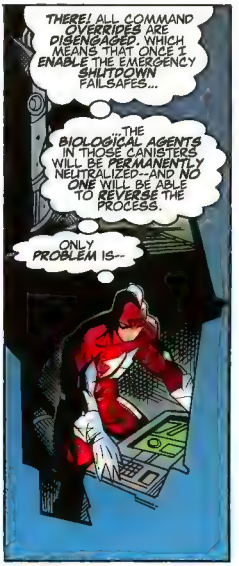
Stan

Stan Lee

Design by Richard Starkings and COMICRAFT


0512 HOURS.
BACK AT THE A.I.M. FORTRESS IN THE ALPS, THE MAIN ARMORY HAS FALLEN TO PLISHKIN'S HYDRA-DISGUISED FORCES.
COMMANDING INSTANT FEAR AND SUBSERVIENCE FROM THOSE AROUND HIM WITH HIS MENACING STATURE, OMEGA RED DUTIFULLY OVERSEES THE OPERATION--
BRAUUA BRAUUA BRAUUA
--ALL THE WHILE INDULGING HIS OWN HOMICIDAL TENDENCIES BY RANDOMLY DRAINING THE LIFE FORCE OF THE OCCASIONAL HAPLESS PRISONER.
UNDER ARKADY'S SUPERVISION, THE SEIZED ARMAMENTS ARE LOADED ONTO VARIOUS SKIFFS--
--AND THEN TAKEN BACK TO THE NARROW LANDING FIELD WHERE THEIR ESCAPE TRANSPORT LIES WAITING.
-PANT!
-PANT!-
SICKLE?! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?!
NO--LET ME GUESS. YOU WENT AFTER MAVERICK ON YOUR OWN, DIDN'T YOU?! AND YOU LET HIM GET THE BEST OF YOU!
NOW IT'S UP TO ME TO TAKE CARE OF THE PEST CONTROL PROBLEM--AS I SHOULD HAVE FROM THE START!! IDIOT!
ARKADY-- DON'T PLISHKIN--
FWAP
SAVE IT, GYPSY BOY! I'VE MORE THAN FULFILLED MY COMMITMENT TO PLISHKIN.
NOW I'M ON MY TIME!

0516 HOURS.
THE BIOGENICS LAB.
MAKE SURE THE STEALTH MISSILES ARE SECURED, AND CAREFUL WITH THOSE WARHEADS! THE MASTER WILL HAVE YOUR HEADS IF THEY'RE DAMAGED!


THERE! ALL COMMAND OVERRIDES ARE DISENGAGED, WHICH MEANS THAT ONCE I ENABLE THE EMERGENCY SHUTDOWN FAILSAFES...
...THE BIOLOGICAL AGENTS IN THOSE CANISTERS WILL BE PERMANENTLY NEUTRALIZED--AND NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO REVERSE THE PROCESS.
ONLY PROBLEM IS--

--REACHING THE SWITCH!

AND SINCE PUSHKIN'S THUGS ARE GETTING READY TO HANDLE THE ACTUAL CANISTERS CONTAINING THE ASSORTED BIOHAZARDS--

--MY ONLY REAL OPTION IS TO MAKE A SUICIDE DASH AND HOPE FOR THE BEST!
EHR--?
WELL, LOOK WHO'S HERE. THE RED GUARDIAN--SELF-PROCLAIMED HERO OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE.

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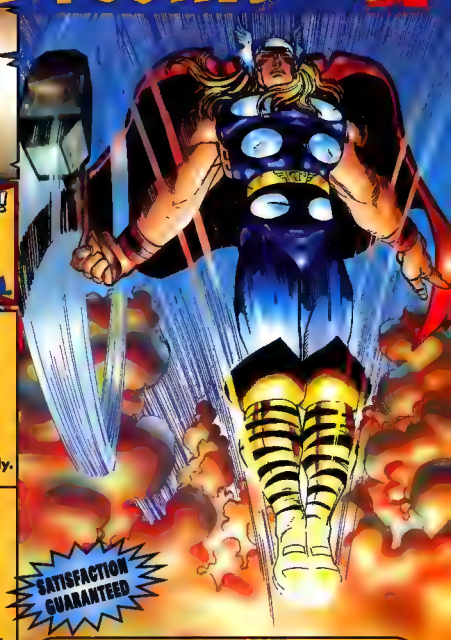

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- ☐ CAM Captain America
- ☐ THO Thor NEW!
- ☐ FAN Fantastic Four
- ☐ IRM Iron Man

Marvel Heroes

- ☐ AFT Alpha Flight
- ☐ DDV Daredevil
- ☐ HFH Heroes For Hire
- ☐ ZAR Ka-Zar
- ☐ SIL Silver Surfer
- ☐ INC The Incredible Hulk
- ☐ BLT Thunderbolts

Spider-Man

- ☐ AMZ Amazing Spider-Man
- ☐ PPK Spectacular Spider-Man
- ☐ SSM Sensational Spider-Man
- ☐ SPI Spider-Man

The X-Men

- ☐ CAB Cable
- ☐ DDP Deadpool
- ☐ GEN Generation X
- ☐ WOL Wolverine
- ☐ XME Uncanny X-Men
- ☐ FAC X-Factor
- ☐ MEN X-Men
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H86MDO

CRETIN! YOUR NOBLE DELUSIONS ARE ONLY GOING TO GET YOU KILLED!
HE MAY BE RIGHT! I'M CORNERED—WITH NO PLACE TO—
MIND IF I CUT IN? HAMMER AND I HAVE SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS.
NNG. BURNING SENSATION'S GETTING HARDER TO BEAR EACH TIME I CHARGE UP. HANDS ARE SEARED RAW AS IT IS—!
FRUMP
SWOOOSH
OH REALLY? CONCERNING WHAT?
SURELY THE NAME ARTHUR FREDERICK BARRINGTON RINGS A BELL, YOU BUTCHER! OR DON'T YOU KEEP TRACK OF YOUR MANY VICTIMS' NAMES?
THWAMM
ERRRG—!
KEEP IT TOGETHER. JUST BLOCK THE PAIN. DON'T LET HIM KNOW HOW MUCH I'M HURTIN'!!

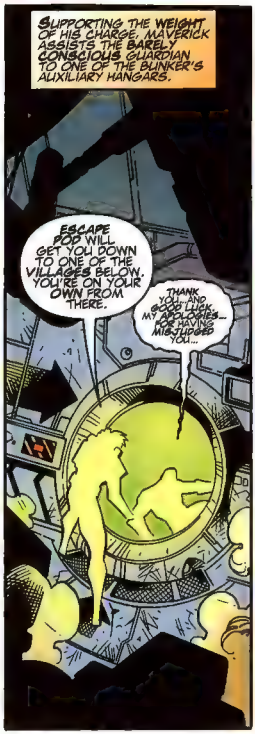
BAH! THE OLD MAJOR WAS AN EASY KILL--AS YOU WILL BE AS WELL!
I'VE GOTTA BUY THE GUARDIAN THE TIME AND SPACE HE NEEDS TO--
SHRAKK
KERSSHHT
LINNG--!
IT'S OVER, HAMMER!
WAKK
KLANG-A-LANG KLANG-A-LANG A-LANGERSSSH
CURSE YOU--WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
THE STUFF IN THOSE CANISTERS WILL SOON BE WORTHLESS TO YOU--AND THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO STOP IT!

THEN TOO BAD FOR YOU!
AAARGH!
SMASH
M-MY LEG--!
NNNN...
WHAT ARE YOU GAPING AT, YOU MORONS? GET THOSE MISSILES OUT OF HERE! I'LL COVER YOUR BACKS.
WHUNNH...?
YOU THREE--FINISH HIM OFF. FINISH 'EM BOTH OFF.

BRAKKA-
BRAKKA-
BRAKKA-
UGGT--!
TWAK
DON'T EVEN TRY IT!

WHAP
THOK!
BAP

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE LET THEM GET AWAY. GO! LEAVE ME HERE-- I'M A LIABILITY!
NO NEED FOR ANY MARTYRS TODAY, RED. IT'LL TAKE THEM A WHILE TO REACH THE TRANSPORT AND FINISH LOADING THEIR GOODIES.
I'VE STILL GOT TIME ENOUGH TO GET YOU TO SAFETY BEFORE THEY HEAD OUT.


SUPPORTING THE WEIGHT OF HIS CHARGE, MAVERICK ASSISTS THE BARELY CONSCIOUS GUARDIAN TO ONE OF THE BUNKER'S AUXILIARY HANGARS.
ESCAPE POD WILL GET YOU DOWN TO ONE OF THE VILLAGES BELOW. YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN FROM THERE.
THANK YOU. AND MY GOOD LUCK. MY APOLOGIES... FOR HAVING MISJUDGED YOU...

DON'T SWEAT IT. I SHOULDN'T HAVE GIVEN YOU SUCH A HARD TIME EITHER. YOU'VE EARNED MY RESPECT, GUARDIAN. TAKE CARE.
KRASSNO. MY NAME... IS KRASSNO GRANITSKY.

OWE YOU...DEBT OF HONOR. IF EVER YOU NEED ANYTHING... CONTACT ME...IN FARGOLOVO...
NNNNN...
I'M AMAZED HE DIDN'T PASS OUT SOONER. THAT LEG WOUND'S PRETTY NASTY. BETTER SET THE AUTO-PILOT AND SEND HIM ON HIS WAY BEFORE--
FINAL CURTAIN TIME, MAVERICK!
AW, NO...!
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT ME BURIED ALIVE BENEATH THE WEAPON X FACILITY! I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO SOME PAYBACK--
--AND NOW THAT THE OPPORTUNITY'S FINALLY HERE, I'M GONNA RELISH EVERY LAST MOMENT!

YOU'LL HAVE TO CATCH ME FIRST, YOU BIG LUMMOX!
WATCH IT WITH THE INSULTS, MAVERICK-- I'VE DISMEMBERED MEN FOR LESS!
HAVE YOU NOW? CONSIDERING OUR SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP--I WAS HOPING I'D BE EXEMPT FROM YOUR WRATH.
WHAT ABOUT THE CARBONADIUM SYNTHESIZER? YOU KILL ME-- YOU'LL NEVER FIND IT, AND WITHOUT IT, YOUR FATE'S SEALED!
DON'T COUNT ON IT!
DRIZZT
OFF YOU GO, KRAGGNO!
RIGHT NOW I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE SYNTHESIZER! I DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYTHING BUT POUNDING YOU INTO A BLOODY PULP!
KROOSH!
AND I DON'T NEED TO KILL YOU TO DO THAT!
WHUUUH!

NOT WHEN I CAN JUST AS EASILY TORTURE YOU TO THE BRINK OF DEATH AND MAKE YOU BEG FOR MERCY.
TELL ME-- HOW DOES IT FEEL TO HAVE THE VERY LIFE DRAINED OUT OF YOU?
--KOFF KAFF KAFF--
BODY'S SO WEAK...CAN BARELY STAY CONSCIOUS...
...GOTTA GET THESE COILS OFF ME--!
OF COURSE! THE COILS!
THEY'RE THE ONLY THINGS KEEPING HIS BODY STABLE. HIS VERY EXISTENCE DEPENDS ON THEM. AND THAT'S A WEAKNESS I CAN EXPLOIT!
ONLY CHANCE I'VE GOT. IS TO PROVOKE HIM INTO SLAMMING ME AROUND HARD ENOUGH...SO I CAN CHARGE UP MY POWERS.
YOU MUST BE...LOSING YOUR TOUCH...IF YOU THINK YOU CAN BEAT ME WITH THIS LAME EFFORT.
IF THIS IS THE BEST YOU CAN DO...I'M EXTREMELY DISAPPOINTED!
INSOLENT CUR!

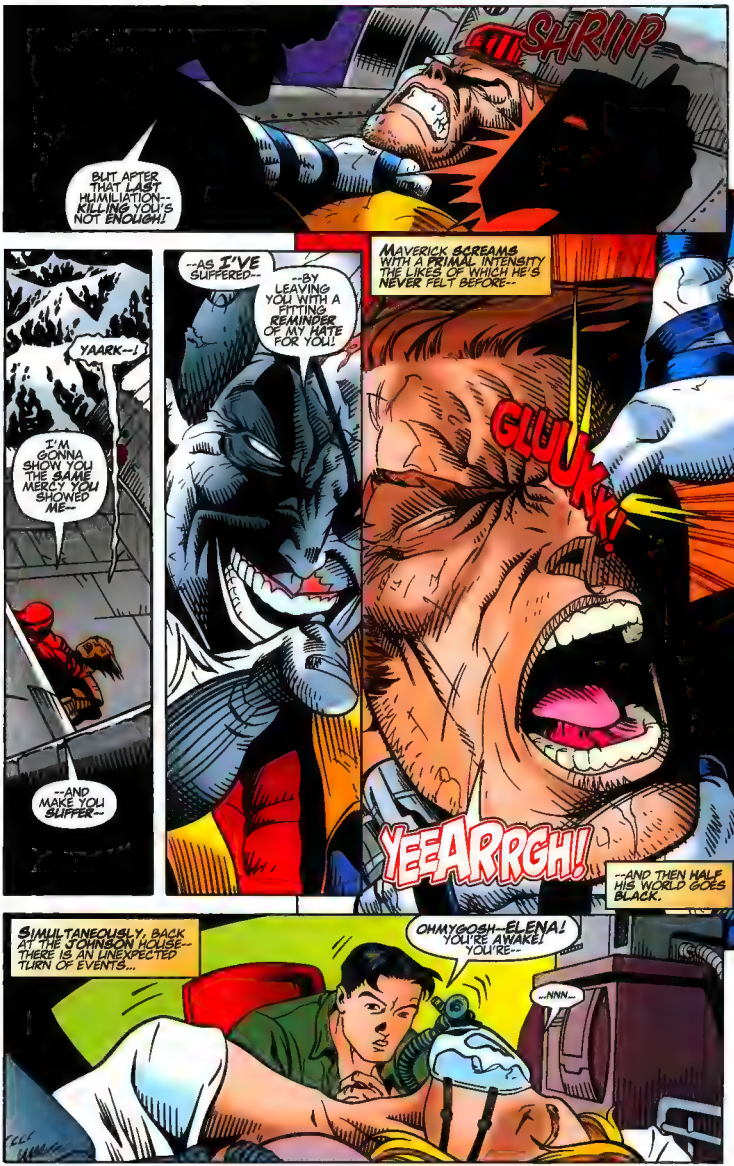
THWAK
WHAT'S THE MATTER, ARKADY--I'M NOT AS TASTY NOW THAT I'M INFECTED WITH THE LEGACY VIRUS?
OR IS IT THAT YOU'RE AFRAID YOU'LL CATCH IT YOURSELF IF YOU KEEP DRAINING MY LIFE FORCE?
OMEGA RED HESITATES FOR THE BRIEFEST OF MOMENTS--AFFORDING MAVERICK THE OPENING TO MAKE HIS MOVE.
GOTCHA!
HERNH?!
SSSSS
WHAT ARE YOU--?
MY COILS!

NNNG!
IN A HERCULEAN EFFORT, MAVERICK USES ARKADY'S FUSED COILS AGAINST HIM TO YANK THE KILLER OFF BALANCE.
GOOD RIDDANCE!
FWAP!
OOLPH!
NOOOOOOO!

RVVVVVV
THAT TOOK WAY TOO LONG. TRANSPORT'S ALREADY REVVING ITS ENGINES.
HAVEN'T A SECOND TO SPARE IF I'M GONNA REACH IT BEFORE IT TAKES OFF.
RVVVVVV
NNN. NOT SURE I CAN MAKE IT IN TIME. ARKADY'S GOILLS TOOK A LOT MORE OUT OF ME THAN I THOUGHT...!
HEART'S RACING.. HEAD'S POUNDING... LEGS FEEL LIKE RUBBER...I'M JUST ABOUT READY TO COLLAPSE...
BUT I CAN'T LET MYSELF!
I WON'T.
TOO MUCH IS AT STAKE...!
ULULUNG?

THESE FAKE HYDRA OUTFITS MAY LOOK COOL, BUT THEY ITCH LIKE CRAZY!
TELL ME ABOUT IT. I'VE GOT THE NASTIEST RASH ON MY--
WHAK
CHUDT
SMRAK
BK-T
RRRRRRRK
WH--?!
FWOK
YEEEEEEEE--!

CHARGE-UP TIME! GOTTA PUT THESE MISSILES OUT OF COMMISSION--
WHAM
NNN!
--PERMANENTLY!
THAT'S IT. I'M SPENT.
NEED TO REST A MOMENT BEFORE I CAN--
I THOUGHT I SMELLED YOUR STENCH!
FWHAKKT
SICKLE?!
CRIPES! BODY'S TAKEN TOO MUCH ABUSE...C-CAN'T HOLD HIM OFF--!
CURSE YOU, MAVERICK! YOU'VE RUINED EVERYTHING! I WANT YOU DEAD!


SHRIIP
BUT AFTER THAT LAST HUMILIATION--KILLING YOU'S NOT ENOUGH!
YAARK--!
I'M GONNA SHOW YOU THE SAME MERCY YOU SHOWED ME--
--AND MAKE YOU SUFFER--
--AS I'VE SUFFERED--
--BY LEAVING YOU WITH A FITTING REMINDER OF MY HATE FOR YOU!!
MAVERICK SCREAMS WITH A PRIMAL INTENSITY THE LIKES OF WHICH HE'S NEVER FELT BEFORE--
GLUUKK!
YEEARRGH!
--AND THEN HALF HIS WORLD GOES BLACK.
SIMULTANEOUSLY, BACK AT THE JOHNSON HOUSE--THERE IS AN UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS...
OHMYGOSH--ELENA! YOU'RE AWAKE! YOU'RE--
...NNN...

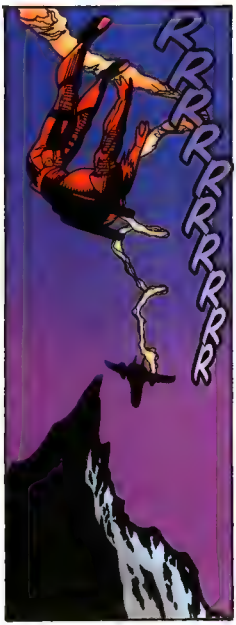
NNNYEE
ARRGH!
LIINNG!
OH GOD, C-CAN'T SEE--!
IT'S OVER--!
NO! CAN'T GIVE UP NOW--!
GOTTA STAY CALM! IF I PANIC-- I'M DEAD!
FWOPP
AAAAK--!
BLAST!
HUUNNF!
VVHA
FRUMP

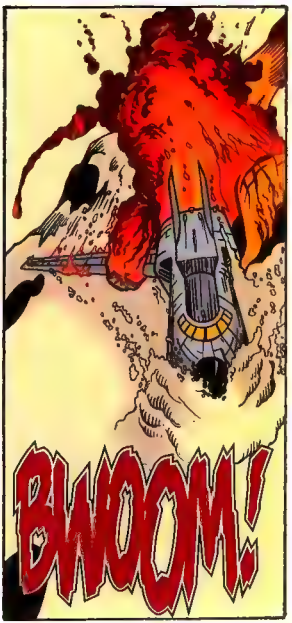
SHRZZAKK
NNRRRRRRRR
RRRRRRRRRRR
UNNHH—!

WHAT THE--?! WHAT'S GOING ON, HELMSMAN?
WUMP
OUR PRIMARY PORT ENGINE'S OFF-LINE!

WHAT?! HOW?
I--I DON'T KNOW. THIS DOESN'T MAKE SENSE! I--

DREEP DREEP DREEP
STRAP IN! AUXILIARY ENGINE JUST WENT DEAD! WE'RE GOING DOWN--!


RRRRRRRRR


BWOOM!

THRUMMP
WHILE AT HIS MANSION IN BORIVICHI, RUSSIA, GANGSTER IVAN PUSHKIN IS QUICKLY APPRISED OF THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS.
AND OMEGA RED?
HE WENT AWOL AND GOT LEFT BEHIND.
TOO BAD FOR HIM. AT LEAST A.I.M. WILL STILL BELIEVE THAT HYDRA WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HEIST.
EVEN IF ALEKADY IS APPREHENDED, HE'S NOT STUPID ENOUGH TO BLOW HIS COVER.
STILL...I AM EXTREMELY DISPLEASED.
SALVAGE WHAT YOU CAN FROM THE CRASH SITE. I'LL ARRANGE AN AIRLIFT FOR YOU AND WHATEVER ARMAMENTS YOU RETRIEVE.
I WANT THE AREA CLEARED BEFORE ANY UNWANTED SPECTATORS ARRIVE ON THE SCENE.
WHAT ABOUT MAVERICK? IF HE SURVIVED THE FALL, HE CAN'T BE FAR FROM HERE. SHOULD I ORGANIZE A SEARCH PARTY TO--?
NO. LEAVE HIM BE. LET CHRISTOPH LICK HIS WOUNDS.

"I WANT HIM WHOLE AGAIN BEFORE I BREAK HIM!"
SSSS
...
...NNN...
NEVER BEEN...IN SO MUCH PAIN. WHOLE BODY'S TREMBLING... GOING INTO SHOCK...
GUESS THAT MEANS...I'M STILL ALIVE, BUT WHERE--?
MY GOD, THERE'S BLOOD EVERYWHERE! WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...? SO DISORIENTED... WHY CAN'T I SEE OUT OF--?
OH NO. IT'S COMING BACK TO ME NOW...!
M-MY EYE--!
SICKLE GOUGED OUT MY EYE--!
BUCK UP, OLD BOY. WOUND'S STILL BLEEDING...
MUCH AS THIS IS GONNA HURT--I'VE GOTTA CAUTERIZE IT...

YEEARRNNGGHH!
SSSS
SSSS
OOOOF. THAT WAS SOME PSI-BLAST! BETTER CALL THE DOC AND LET HIM KNOW ABOUT--
...MMM...
MMMAV MMMMAVERICK...
MAVERICK?! I WONDER COULD THEIR PSI-LINK HAVE BEEN RE-ESTABLISHED WHEN ELENA CAME OUT OF HER COMA?
WOULD THAT EXPLAIN HER SUDDEN PSIONIC OUTBURST?
SHHH, IT'S OKAY--DON'T STRAIN YOURSELF. MAVERICK'S NOT HERE, BUT HE'S FINE, I PROMISE. WHEREVER HE IS--

"--HE'LL COME BACK TO US!"
FIN

NORTH DECODED

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Well it's been fun, kids, but this was the last issue of Mr. Maverick's Wild Ride. So we thought we'd do a double sized letters page to thank all the fans who kept writing issue after issue! Thanks! Now, on to the mail:

Dear *NORTH DECODED*,

I am writing in response to a letter by Mr. Garza printed in the letters page of issue #8. I just wanted to say "Thanks!" It's good to see that some one else shares my sentiments in regard to Boost's character. "Fascinating and original," that was great! What better way to describe him? I would love to see Maverick and Boost team up.

Of course, I also want to congratulate Jorge Gonzalez and Jim Cheung for a job well done. The overall quality of the book is excellent and it has quickly become my favorite series along with DEADPOOL. The mix of action, intrigue and personal struggles is perfect. Thanks for such a consistently good book!

Ricardo Salinas
Terranova 105, Vista H
Monterrey NL Mexico

We can't think of a better way, Ricardo! Boost was certainly cool. But MAVERICK was better! Fear not though, Jim has taken over penciling X-FORCE and Jorge has some real cool stuff in the works. You won't be seeing the last of this awesome team!

Dear *NORTH DECODED*,

The subtlety in Kevin Somers' coloring of MAVERICK #9 was not wasted on this reader. Truly advanced! It evoked, I believe, the desired mood, the targeted sense of mystery and subdued the reality. The story was quite mystifying. I'll be glad when Maverick's powers stabilize, and when he and Chris Johnson can get together to chat for moral support.

Carl Peterson
2979 8th Ave. #30N
New York NY 10039

You made Kevin blush, Carl. It's not often the colorist gets such praise, but Kevin Somers definitely deserves it! As for the get-together, you'll have to wait for a special for that to happen!

Dear *NORTH DECODED*,

Thanks to all the MAVERICK team for a quality comic. I enjoy the plots and the art. You have a ton of interesting villains, like Hammer and Sickle, and especially the Confessor. The biggest villain of all, though, is the Legacy Virus infecting Maverick. This makes for good human drama, as he has to deal with an enemy he can't fight and take care of the bad guys, too! Also, like Iron Man, he has his gadgets and that's way cool! I also like the supporting characters. I hope Elena comes out of her coma real soon! There're only so many comics with such good stories and great art! Just keep'm coming!

Eric T. Brock
2907 Tallahassee HWY
Attapulgus, GA 31715

Quality is our middle name, Eric! Looks like you got your wish! Elena is alive and well! You're right when you say that the true villain is the Legacy Virus. It's the one thing Maverick can't beat up. He just needs to learn to cope. Sometimes that's the hardest thing of all.

Dear *NORTH DECODED*,

I wanted to write and say that I've been very impressed with the storytelling in MAVERICK. When I first heard of MAVERICK it sounded good, but I didn't think that anyone could blend a love story and a brotherly relationship along with espionage. I was wrong, and man, am I glad! I was wondering if Chris is going to see his girlfriend before he gets even sicker? Oh, yeah, and when are Hammer and Sickle coming back?

Eric Shipp
500 HWY 304
Thibodaux, LA 20301

You're darn tootin' you were wrong, Eric. Jorge is a master at writing and Jim can pencil a story like no one's business! They were a great team! Chris probably wouldn't have gone back to New York to see his girlfriend; it would bring out the Friends of Humanity again, and he would never want to see her hurt. But then again, love is a strange thing.

Dear *NORTH DECODED*,

I just finished MAVERICK #7 and I loved it. Of course all the other issues were great, too! I usually can't wait for MAVERICK to come out every month! What I especially like about MAVERICK is that he is German, like me! I would like to see Maverick speak more German in the upcoming issues, like in issue #5 when he ordered a Hefeweizen and more background information about his past in Germany. I thought Maverick is some kind of head-hunter. Will he join the Spiderhunt? I asked that because he is, at the moment, in Manhattan. What about a crossover with Daredevil? I think

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those two guys could handle anything! What is Maverick's job? Is he a kind of hero-for-hire? I hope you will keep up your great work on MAVERICK! Jorge Gonzalez's writing keeps getting better every issue and the rest of the team does a great job too! I can't wait to read MAVERICK #8. It will be "unglaublich, phantastisch and uberwaltigend." That means "simply cool" in German!

Christopher Witthohn
Willinghusener Weg 98
Glinde, Germany 21509

Tons of questions there, Christopher, but fortunately we have the answers! Maverick worked as a government operative for Canada along with Wolverine, Sabretooth and Johnny Wraith. He then went freelance (which means he's a gun for hire). Thankfully, he's got a conscience, so he won't just kill people for money, like Deadpool! As you've already seen, Maverick didn't join the Spiderhunt, and at the moment there aren't any plans to team up Daredevil and Maverick, but that sounds like a really good idea. Oh Bob. . .

Dear *NORTH DECODED*,

I just have to say I'm really into these MAVERICK comics, and I think that the fight between Maverick and Sabretooth was great! I still believe Sabretooth had the upper hand though!

What I would like to know is, will Omega Red be making an appearance in any future issues of MAVERICK? I don't completely understand Elena Ivanova's past. I know she had a nightmare about her mother being killed in issue #6, but who exactly is her father and is he still alive? You guys just keep up the good work and I promise to keep buying!

Miguel Crespo
(Address withheld by request)

You want Omega Red, Miguel, well, you got him! He showed up in issue #11 and here in the last issue. Now, about Elena. Her father was Epsilon Red, a Russian operative with super powers like Omega Red. Sabretooth killed her father and shot her mother. That's why she keeps having those nightmares and wants to kill Sabretooth so badly. We guess she just should have stayed home.

Dear *NORTH DECODED*,

MAVERICK canceled?! That really stinks! Just when I was starting to get excited about this book you people pull the plug! I feel really bad about this!

Anyway, since this is a done deal, I hope you at least keep Jorge Gonzalez and Jim Cheung busy with other things. These two are great talents and I'd hate for Marvel to lose them. How about Jorge writing X-FACTOR?

Well, before I say good-bye to you, I also want to ask another favor. Please don't send MAVERICK to limbo! Please keep the character around, maybe even as part of a team.

I hope I'm not too late to ask you for a few guest stars for MAVERICK! Maybe for the double-sized #12? I'd like to see Gambit, Deadpool, Mystique and Boost! Thanks for the ride!

J.D. Ross
(Address withheld by request)

We feel just as bad as you do, J.D. Never fear though, both Jorge and Jim have other gigs to attend to here at mighty Marvel. So the fans won't be without those fellas for long. Unfortunately your request for guest stars was a tad too late. This issue was in the works long before the word came down, but we would have loved to have had Boost, Deadpool, Gambit and Mystique show up. It would have been one wild story! Maybe it'll happen in a one-shot or limited series. You never know!

Dear *NORTH DECODED*,

OH NO!!! Tell me that the rumors I've heard are false! I heard that MAVERICK is canceled with issue #12! This totally bites. How is it that this book gets canned even though lower selling titles continue to be published? It must be a conspiracy.

If/when this title comes to an end I hope it won't be the last we see of David North in the Marvel Universe. And I also hope that it won't be the last time we see Jimmy Cheung. I love his art! I thought Leo Fernandez was an excellent choice to fill in on issue #10; his style mimics Jimmy's really well.

I can't wait to see Maverick's showdown with Omega Red next month, and thanks for the great read MAVERICK has been this past year.

Jay Otos
(Address withheld by request)

We don't know either, Jay, but this was the last one. We hope that this issue left you feeling complete. You may see a one-shot or an X-MEN UNLIMITED with our favorite man of mystery, Maverick! That way we can take care of any unfinished business. Glad you liked Leo; we thought he would be a nice fill-in artist, too. We try not to have the fill-in artist be too different from the regular penciler.

ASSISTANT EDITOR'S NOTE:

Frank was nice enough to let me say my piece. I just wanted to thank all the fans who wrote in and e-mailed me. It's really nice to know I wasn't the only one who liked MAVERICK. It was a great pleasure to work with Jorge, Jim, Andrew, Kevin, Chris, and Leo! They are all great and I'm glad I had the chance to get to know them. Thanks, folks, I'll see ya in the funny pages! Nuff said!

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